

**Stephen Scovell****Statement of Faith**

When I was a kid, I thought of God as distant and unaffected. The relationship was more of a transaction. I do something good, then maybe someday I'll make it to heaven. I think a lot of it stems from some trauma I experienced as a kid. Since God didn't save me from my situation, I figured God didn't care all that much. When I was in college, I began to open up about my past with some close friends. These friends brought healing into my life. I believe now they were the miracle I longed for. I see God in the conversations we shared. I feel the Spirit flowing throughout my story. I no longer believe in a distant God but a God who draws near to me; one who calls me friend. God is the creator of the cosmos and, yet, God is as intimate as the companionship of a loved one. I used to think that seeing Jesus as a friend sounded childish. But I've come to learn that Jesus is the best kind of friend. He is the kind of friend who walks with us during the most difficult moments of our lives. He is the kind of friend who puts people in our lives to carry us toward healing, toward freedom, toward redemption. Above all, I believe that Jesus is a redeemer. He breathes new life into dead bones and restores what has been broken. Jesus offers us resurrection. But not just the kind that happens after we've died. The good news is better than that. Jesus offers a resurrection that transforms us here and now. Jesus redeems our hurt, our sin, our fear and calls us to be a renewed people - the kind of people who enter into the world's hurt and work toward its liberation. On the cross, Jesus took on the suffering of the world, but in his resurrection he overcame it. I believe that on our journey with Jesus we will encounter many crosses, but also many resurrections. And I believe that love is at the heart of all of this. Scripture tells us that to know God is to know love. I believe that Scripture reveals to us the character of God. And I believe that character is love. It is out of love that God sent God's only son - Jesus - to redeem us. And it is out of grace that we have been given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit sustains us; it draws us into communion with God; it gives us the power to carry out the work of Jesus Christ. As members of the body of Christ, we have been called to carry out a holy and sacred work. We have been called to gather together as a worshipping community. I believe we are created for worship. And in our communion and baptism we experience God's grace and unending presence. But our worship must extend beyond church walls. We have been called to go out and share the love and grace of God to the ends of the earth. We have been called to transform our communities. We have been called to walk alongside others in their suffering and celebrate with them in their joys. We have been called to bring the kingdom of God to earth. The kingdom of God is a kingdom founded on love and redemption. And I believe that one day this kingdom will reign forever.